

# Dermot O'Brien Hourihane (1933–2020)

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Dermot Hourihane was born in Ballina, County Mayo, but his family soon moved to Dublin where he was educated. He studied medicine at University College Dublin and interned at St Vincent's Hospital in Dublin where he began his pathology career under Professor John (Jock) McGrath. He continued his training in London at the Hammersmith Hospital and the London Hospital (later the Royal London Hospital) where his mentors included Sir John Dacie, and Professors Israel Doniach, Victor Hoffbrand and John Azzopardi. He wrote early papers on microangiopathic haemolytic anaemia and the coeliac mucosal biopsy. His work on the association of asbestos with mesothelioma was the subject of his MD thesis, and was particularly influential as the now well-known link had only recently come to light.

He returned to Dublin in 1966 as reader (senior lecturer) in Pathology at Trinity College and became Professor of Pathology and Morbid Anatomy there in 1973, succeeding Professor WTE McCaughey. Trinity was associated with six small city centre hospitals (the Federated Dublin Voluntary Hospitals), each with its own small general laboratory. He led the reorganisation of these, first into specialist single discipline laboratories in the various hospitals, with histopathology in the bucolic surrounds of the Trinity campus, and later into a single large laboratory sited at the newly developed St James's Hospital. He was director of the laboratory, consultant histopathologist and head of the histopathology department. He was very actively involved in numerous activities related to his own department, the hospitals that it served, Trinity College at large, and the Dublin and Irish medical scene in general. To say he was busy was an understatement; he was a person of remarkable vigour. Given the hospital politics and sundry related matters, the feat of amalgamating the Federated Hospital laboratories, leading to later hospital relocations, was remarkable and a testament to his political acumen. A founding fellow of the Faculty of Pathology of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, he became its second dean in 1984 and was also dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at Trinity (1979–1983). He maintained his life-long interest in gastrointestinal pathology, particularly in coeliac disease and inflammatory bowel disease and vigorously supported research in these, and a range other areas. Dermot retired as Professor in 1998 but remained in pathology practice for some years and continued to attend weekly Grand Rounds at St James's Hospital until Parkinson's Disease finally slowed him down in his last years and led to his death aged 87 years.

Dermot was a physician driven by a desire to provide the best standard of pathology and medicine. His histopathology undergraduate course was a favourite with

students, the histopathology department had a strong postgraduate programme and was a regular examination centre for the final RCPATH in histopathology. He was an enthusiastic advocate of multidisciplinary clinical and mortality conferences; a weekly clinicopathological conference for the students, with senior staff in attendance, was an institution. Through his roles in national organisations he accelerated the replacement of the general pathologist by subspecialist pathologists and advocated increased laboratory staffing. He mentored many pathologists who went on to play significant roles in pathology in Ireland and further afield. There are few histopathology departments where such a sense of purpose, unity and fellowship has prevailed among staff at every level.

He also became involved in social issues. He confronted the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin on the ban of Catholics attending Trinity College, he was a founding member of the Irish Family Planning Association and also a founding member of a doctors' lobby group in favour of the first referendum in Ireland on abortion in 1983.

Dermot was a keen golfer, and enjoyed opera, cinema, bird watching and gardening. A fine storyteller, he revelled in stimulating conversations; his unfiltered observations across the department coffee table were an education to those in training. He will be remembered fondly by the many who enjoyed his exuberant personality and his broad spectrum of medical and non-medical interests. He married Maura Brady in 1957 and they had five children. He died on 10 July 2020.



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